

## MINUTES

### MANSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

Members present: R. Favretti (Chairman), B. Gardner, J. Goodwin, R. Hall, K. Holt, P. Kochenburger,

P. Plante, B. Ryan

Member absent: G. Zimmer

Alternates present: M. Beal, L. Lombard, B. Pociask

Staff present: G. Padick (Director of Planning)

Chairman Favretti called the Special Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., appointing Beal to act in Zimmer's place.

#### PUBLIC HEARING, CONTINUED:

Application to amend the Zoning Regulations; Storrs Center Alliance and Mansfield Downtown Partnership, applicants, File #1256

Application to amend the Zoning Map to create a new Storrs Center Special Design District, Storrs Center Alliance and Mansfield Downtown Partnership, applicants, File #1257

Chairman Favretti opened the Continued Public Hearing at 7:03 for the above applications. Commission members present were Favretti, Gardner, Goodwin, Hall, Holt, Kochenburger, Plante, Ryan, and alternates Beal, Lombard and Pociask. Padick listed the following communications received and distributed to all members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and also noted a 4-26-07 letter from Denise W. Merrill, State Representative of the fifty-fourth District that was handed in this evening and will be distributed to members prior to the next meeting:

- 3-29-07 letter from Francis X. Archambault, Jr., Chairman of Regional School District 19
- undated letter from the Open Space Preservation Committee, comments from their 4-10-07 meeting
- 4-12-07 email correspondence from Charles R. Vermilyea, Jr. and a 4-12-07 response from Padick.
- 4-18-07 letter from Willimantic River Alliance, Inc.
- 4-23-07 letter from Dennis O'Brien, Town Attorney
- 4-25-07 letter from Lon R. Hultgren, on behalf of the Transportation Advisory Committee
- 4-26-07 letter from Martin and Karla Fox
- 4-26-07 letter of questions and comments from Rudy Favretti, FASLA
- 4-26-07 letter from Christopher Kueffner

Chairman Favretti reviewed the procedures for conducting this Public Hearing.

Attorney Cole-Chu, representing the applicants, introduced the project team. He reviewed issues and questions previously raised by staff and Commission members, and noted that the applicants' responses to some of these issues would be explained later in the Public Hearing. He also briefly addressed questions regarding boarding houses, signage, traffic, the road to the post office road and parking.

Favretti asked for questions or comments from Commission members.

Gardner asked if the project team had given any thought to including a movie theatre or a small arts theatre in the planned development area. Macon Toledano indicated that they have looked into incorporating a small scale theatre, but accommodating the parking depends on other nearby commercial uses. Norm Goldman, of Desman Associates, said that performance arts theaters are considered a good fit with office and daytime commercial uses: each would utilize the parking area at a different time.

Hall asked for clarification on the term "Residence Clubs" and noted that the definition previously given seemed to be inconsistent with what they are proposing. His research found the term meant high-end timeshare. Attorney Cody explained that the applicant was trying to use generic terms. Howard Kaufman, Vice President and General Council for Leyland Alliance, LLC, clarified that a high-end timeshare is not what is being proposed, and suggested that the applicants use a different title.

Holt had a general question about regulating absentee landlords and homeowners associations, and Padick responded that these were not in PZC's purview.

Kochenburger expressed continued concern for the traffic on Route 195/Storrs Road and pedestrian safety, and he asked if a tunnel/underpass below Storrs Road connecting Bolton Road to Dog Lane had been evaluated. He questioned if ADA requirements could be a negative reason for not developing this. Toledano reiterated that the project's focus is on the public realm. The goal is to slow traffic by creating medians and narrowing the streets. Norman Garrick, Professor of Engineering at UConn, representing the applicant, indicated that the proposal is customized to encourage a pedestrian-friendly downtown, and he felt that an underground tunnel would take away from the overall design: tunnels are not good for villages. Geoff Fitzgerald also noted that existing underground utilities will be expanded to accommodate the project, and the tunnel would have to be installed below them. A tunnel would be costly, potentially unsafe, and is not feasible for this plan. Toledano said that he will get more information on tunnels, but concluded that the applicants want to create a safe and attractive pedestrian-friendly design on the surface, not below the surface.

At this time Chairman Favretti opened the floor to receive public comment.

Karla Fox, 1 Storrs Heights Road, said the area's economic viability will increase from nine months to the whole year, because of the mix of uses proposed for Storrs Center.

She asked if incoming professionals at UConn will be able to rent living space in the housing units for short time periods, by semester, for instance.

Betty Robinson, 5c Sycamore Drive, felt this was a well thought-out project, and asked if there will be any connections between the open space area and Whetten's Woods and the Moss Sanctuary. She also wanted the open space to be accessible to residential and commercial areas within the project.

Pat Hempel expressed her pleasure with the efforts that the applicants, developer, and design team have displayed since the onset of this project. However, she was concerned about the water supply and is eager to read the water report due to be released on May 2, 2007.

Janet Jones expressed her concern with the safety issues that a tunnel/underpass poses to pedestrians, especially to women.

Helen Koehn, Town Transportation Committee and Town Council Member, questioned if the bus stop in this area will be able to accommodate a large tour bus/travel bus. Geoff Fitzgerald indicated that the bus stop indicated on the design meets the State standards and could accommodate a large tour bus. Koehn also asked that the PZC give careful consideration when reviewing the Water Supply Report.

Bill Wickless was concerned that the process of multiple steps and approvals may discourage businesses from coming in.

Lon Hultgren, Director of Public Works, clarified UConn's committed uses for the water supply for this development. He clarified comments made previously and stated that the Water Supply Report will be out on May 2, 2007 and the report figures show that there is enough water to support this project. The needs-estimate figures previously quoted did not take into consideration industrial use (which in some cases may re-use water) and that the plan included many properties that may never need water service. However, for the uncommitted uses that are not part of the project, the Town will probably need additional water sources.

Kochenburger asked for an explanation on the process that would need to be followed if in the future the Haidous or Taylor families want to apply for a rezoning to SCSDD of their commercial properties. Cody responded that they would have to follow the same application criteria as the current applicants, and that a map amendment would be required.

Holt commented that once the PZC approves the two applications, there is no direct connection between the public and the developers except for the Public Hearings to be held by the Mansfield Downtown Partnership. She asked about the requirements for holding those Public Hearings, and what would be the next steps in the process after PZC approval, for merchants to come into the retail space. Would all owners/residents within 500 feet be notified of a Public Hearing by certified mail, plus legal notices placed in newspapers? Response: yes. Would the developers be required to hold a second Public Hearing if they wanted to modify the approved permit? Response: yes, if the modification is major. Cody responded that the PZC regulations would be followed in the construction or development processes, and the Mansfield Downtown Partnership would hold the Public Hearings as per PZC regulations.

Hall questioned the process once the Downtown Partnership gives its recommendation to the Director of Planning. He is concerned that the Downtown Partnership may not be impartial and this may be a case of "the fox guarding the chicken coop". Cole-Chu

explained that the Downtown Partnership's purpose is to ensure that this municipal development plan will be implemented and that the procedure follows what was approved by the PZC. He also noted that the PZC has the authority to amend the regulations if problems arise.

Favretti asked the applicant how preliminary the submitted "Preliminary Plans" are. Cody responded that minor modifications may be made, but if the Director of Planning feels that they are not minor, the applicants would have to come back to the PZC for another Public Hearing. Toledano said that it is not favorable for applicants to make major changes. He noted that the buildings will have more detail than what they have now, but the square footage, occupancy amounts and parking spaces will remain the same. Favretti is impressed with the Architectural Guidelines, but not impressed with non-architectural information such as landscaping and signage.

Bob Coughlin, Storrs Heights Road, hoped that the PZC will approve these applications. However, he is concerned about the two attorneys for the applicants telling the Commissioners what they can and cannot do. He hopes that the Town Attorney has reviewed this, as he is concerned about the powers of the PZC in the future.

Sherry Hilding submitted a letter to the Commission expressing concerns for the traffic, noise and dust that will be increased if the Post Office Road is a connection to the main road in the development. She suggested using bollards that could be lowered and raised in the street to direct traffic away from Post Office Road.

Tom Callahan, Associate Vice President of UConn, confirmed that the Water Analysis report will be available no later than Wednesday, May 2, 2007. Favretti expressed concern that the applicant will not have enough time to review the water study and prepare responses to questions raised this evening to be ready for the PZC's next meeting on May 7. He suggested continuing the Public Hearing until the May 21, 2007 regularly scheduled meeting; the applicant agreed. Cody noted that he will submit a letter to the Planning Office granting an extension and continuing the Public Hearing until May 21, 2007.

Holt asked about who would own the open space area, and who or what organization/entity would hold the conservation easement. Cody noted that the applicants have not defined that yet, and also added that after approval from PZC, the entire project must be approved by the Inland Wetlands Agency.

Chairman Favretti noted that there were no further comments or questions from the audience, commission or the applicants. Holt MOVED, Gardner seconded, to accept the applicants' request to extend the time and to continue the Public Hearing to May 21, 2007. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### Minutes:

Hall MOVED, and Gardner seconded, to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held on April 5, 2007. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### Adjournment:

Favretti declared the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine K. Holt, Secretary